

## Ahwatukee a tough home for yoga studios

**Colleen Sparks** - Nov. 18, 2008 09:03 AM Special for The Republic

In today's economy, yoga is feeling the pinch.

Several Ahwatukee Foothills freestanding yoga studios have closed after fewer than five years in business.

Some teachers and students say it's because yoga is free at area churches or included in local health club memberships that also offer residents other classes and services. Several Valley yoga studios charge \$10 to \$25 per class with discounts for monthly memberships. An adult membership at the Ahwatukee YMCA is \$48 a month.

"It makes sense to have a membership at a place where you can get all your wellness needs," YMCA senior program director Sandra Franks said. In 2000, Brooke Boon opened Studio Om on Mountain Parkway and Chandler Boulevard with the former Foothills Athletic Club owner. Two years later, she said, she left the studio for personal reasons. The studio later closed.

Boon said it was hard attracting students in Ahwatukee, where many "extremely active" athletes don't have time for it.

Tom Patrick said owning Chi Yoga Institute on Mountain Parkway and Chandler Boulevard was a "labor of love." The studio, in existence almost four years, offered a blend of yoga and the chi kung energy practice.

Attendance dropped greatly when yoga classes became available at the YMCA and area health clubs, Patrick said.

Yoga Euphoria, on Chandler Boulevard and 40th Street, opened in 2005 and closed recently. A previous yoga studio there also had closed. Yoga Euphoria's owner could not be reached for comment.

Josh Rothman, who taught at Yoga Euphoria, said with "the right teachers, the right marketing" he thought a studio could succeed in Ahwatukee.

In 2005, Boon started the international Holy Yoga ministry, offering a Christian worship-based practice. In Ahwatukee, Holy Yoga is now taught at the YMCA, Mountain Park Community, Esperanza Lutheran, Horizon Presbyterian and Foothills Baptist churches. The classes are free with donations accepted at some sites.

Mountain Park Community Church Yoga Ministry leader Elena Porter said she believes yoga studios charge too much.

"I would rather have a studio with 50 people paying \$5 or \$6" than one with three or four people paying \$20 each, she said. Her Monday night class draws as many as 60 people.

Ahwatukee resident Bob Doehnert said he started taking yoga at the YMCA, but he prefers the ambiance at Mountain Park Community Church's Christ Centered Yoga program. "It's a godsend that we can now have yoga for free and it's in my church," he said. "Everybody's looking for a deal."